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By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

To be continued every THURSDAY.

THURSDAY, *May* the 6th, 1756.

To Mr. FITZ-ADAM,

SIR,

YOU muſt have frequently obſerved upon the face of that uſeful piece of machinery, a clock, the minute and hour hands, in their revolution through the twelve diviſions of the day, to be not only ſhifting continually from one figure to another, but to ſtand at times in a quite oppoſite direction to their former bearings, and to each other. Now I conceive this to be pretty much the caſe with that complicated piece of MECHANISM, a modern female, or young woman of faſhion: for as ſuch I was accuſtomed to conſider that part of the ſpecies, as having no power to determine their own motions and appearances, but as acted upon by the mode, and *ſet* to any point, which the party who took the lead, or (to ſpeak more properly) it's REGULATOR, pleaſed.

But

But it has ſo happened in the circumrotation of modes and faſhions, that the preſent ſet are not only moving on continually from one pretty fancy and conceit to another, but have departed quite aſide from their former principles; dividing from each other in a circumſtance, wherein they were always accuſtomed to unite, and uniting, where there was ever wont to be a diſtinction or difference.

I DO not know whether I make myſelf ſufficiently underſtood; but you will eaſily comprehend my drift, when I tell you, that the prevailing mode, in reſpect of dreſs, is at preſent to have no mode at all. There is now no ſuch thing as an *uniform* among the ladies, no dutiful conformity to the pattern or ſtandard, as heretofore: but the mode is *laid open*, and there appears the ſame ſpirit againſt a *concluſive faſhion*, as againſt an *excluſive trade*. The pride now is to get as far away as poſſible, not only from the vulgar, but from one another, and that too, as well in the firſt principles of dreſs, as in it's ſubordinate decorations: ſo that this fluctuating humour is perpetually ſhewing itſelf in ſome new and particular ſort of cap, flounce, knot or tippet; and every woman that you meet, affects independency, and to ſet up for herſelf.

Now, as I profeſs myſelf to be a ſtickler for liberty, and againſt all invidious limitations, as well as a lover of variety, and an encourager of invention, I am therefore not diſpleaſed with theſe fair independents for this notable attempt of their's to vindicate the honour and freedom of their own fancies and judgments upon this occaſion. But as they have wandered away from each other in the ſeveral articles of dreſs, ſo have they united altogether as happily in a point, which cannot fail of recommending itſelf to ſuch as have a critical ear, and are apt to be offended with any diſagreement of ſounds, namely, in VOICE and ELOCUTION, in which they maintain a ſurprizing uniformity. A friend of mine, whoſe ear (as you will perceive from what I am going to relate of him) is not turned for our modern oratory, was introducing the other day ſome uncourtly obſervations upon this head, which I ſhall take the freedom to ſet down at full length.

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" THE beauty and power of ſpeech, ſays he, was " wont to be the reſult of clearneſs and perſpicuity, of " a diſtinct and harmonious elocution, of a juſt and " proper cadence, together with a natural and eaſy di- " verſity of manner and phraſe, growing out of the ſub- " ject, and congenial with it. Converſation is never " ſo pleaſing, as when it is compoſed of a well-ordered " variety of perſons and characters, tempering and re- " commending each other; where the forward and " importunate are qualified and reſtrained by the diffi- " dent and the modeſt; the bold and peremptory by " the more ſupple and complaiſant; where the ſpirited " with the meek, the lively with the ſedate, make a " happy mixture, and all together go into the compo- " ſition of an agreeable ſociety. Whereas the conver- " ſation of the female world (continues my friend) is " at preſent all out of the ſame piece: all diſtinctions " are taken away, and the ſeveral ranks and orders a- " mong them laid into one. There is one line of ſen- " timent, air, manner, tone and phraſe, running through " the whole, and no diſcerning, for a few ſeconds, a " young woman with ſix or eight hundred pounds to " her fortune, from a ducheſs; eſpecially if ſhe hap- " pens to have been allowed to keep company with her " betters. I know ſeveral of theſe humble companions, " who with no leſs impropriety than impotence, are " ever ſtraining themſelves and their throats in compa- " ny, to get upon a level with their quality-friends; " and at all other times you ſhall ſee them affecting to " ſpeak (as the Latins well expreſs it) *ore rotundo*, full " and ſonorous, round and peremptory, with a very " deciſive emphaſis, as if there could lie no appeal from " their ſentence; taking a larger ſcope for utterance, " by opening their mouths to a diſproportionate width; " inſomuch, that I have looked upon myſelf, while in " their company, as ſitting in the midſt of half a ſcore " hautboys, a ſort of muſic, that, when attempted by " unſkillful hands, has ſomething in it mightily over- " bearing, though they tell me, when exerciſed by ſuch " as are qualified for it, and mixed up with other in- " ſtruments, it will anſwer very well. Such is the " pomp of utterance of our preſent women of faſhion; " which, though it may tend to ſpoil many a pretty " mouth, can never recommend an indifferent one. " And hence it is that there is ſo great a ſcarcity of ori- " ginals, and that the ear is ſuch a daily ſufferer from

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" an identity of phraſe, whether it be *vaſtly*, *horridly*, " *abominably*, *immenſely* or *exceſſively*, which, with " three or four more calculated for the ſame ſwiſs-like " ſervice, make up the whole ſcale or gamut of modern " female converſation.

" THERE are many cauſes aſſigned (continues he) " why ſo many of the males live ſingle, and it has been " principally aſcribed to the cheap and eaſy opportuni- " ties of gratification which fall in their way. Now this " may in a great meaſure be true; but our fine ladies for- " get, that while they are daily making ſome new re- " velation of their perſons, and are ſo ſtudious to furniſh " out a variety of entertainment to the eye, they have " neglected to make a ſuitable proviſion for the ear; and " that, ſhould love chance to ſtraggle in at the former, " he may yet find his way out at the latter. And I have " frequently remarked, that when a female of this turn, " with her ſails and ſtreamers out, has begun to *bear* " *down*, in hopes of a prize, the object of the chace has " conſtantly ſheered off, and left her to complain of her " ill ſucceſs to thoſe much fitter companions, the winds " and waves.

" Now the members of this claſs are the moſt con- " ſiderable in point of numbers: but when upon my " retiring from ſome of theſe, and betaking myſelf to a " diſtant and more peaceable quarter of the room, I have " fallen in with others, whoſe converſation has been of " a more moderate caſt, and more under the wind, yet " I have ſtill obſerved the ſame monotony to prevail, " the ſame conformity of manner and phraſe, and that " their pipes were all tuned to the ſame quality note. " For, as in the former inſtance, the generality of thoſe in " high life are ever raiſing their voices to a proportion- " able elevation above the ordinary level, and diſtinguiſh- " ing themſelves by a round and ſonorous elocution; " ſo there are others of the ſame claſs, who ſeeing na- " ture has not furniſhed them with an adequate ſtrength " of lungs, or with organs framed for a more bold and " voluble utterance, have therefore a good deal of what " Tully calls the *conciſum ac minutum*, a laconic, mincing " kind of ſpeech, extremely quick and peremptory, " equally emphatical and deciſive, and generally en- " forced with a ſhort dictatorial bridle and nod of the

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" head, as an inconteſtable ratification of what they are " pleaſed to affirm or deny. And theſe, as well as " thoſe abovementioned, have multitudes of inferior " admirers and copyiſts in their train, preſſing cloſe be- " hind, and treading upon their heels.

" It is true, I am an enemy, for the moſt part, to that " reigning practice of making the perſon, who laſt left " the company, a ſubject for general canvaſs by thoſe " that remain: yet whenever any one of theſe non-ori- " ginals (whom we cannot ſo properly pronounce to be " *full of themſelves*, as *full of other people*) ſhall have " taken her leave, and got the door upon her back, " the company, in my opinion, ſhould have free ſcope " and licence to go into an immediate enquiry, who " ſhe is, what fortune ſhe has, what her education has " been, whether handſome, tolerable, or &c, and ſo on " through the uſual courſe of particulars. In ſhort" ——

My friend was going on in the ſame ſtrain, when I interpoſed, and began to expoſtulate with him upon ſome of the above particulars. " Nay, nay, ſays he, " don't think me partial neither; I may perhaps give " them their revenge upon our ſex at ſome future op- " portunity;" and ſo left me.

Upon the whole, I very much ſuſpect (as I ſaid before) that my friend's ear is none of the beſt; but at the ſame time I muſt do him the juſtice to obſerve, that I myſelf am at times ſomewhat deaf, and that he is generally allowed to be a very ſenſible well-judging man.

I am,

Mr. Fitz-Adam, *&c.*

My honeſt correſpondent appears to be in ſome pain, leaſt the freedom and ſimplicity of his friend's argument may not happen to ſquare with that delicacy and complaiſance, which have been hitherto maintained by the World towards the beautiful part of our ſpecies: but however that be, I muſt confeſs that I have fallen of late myſelf into ſomewhat of the ſame train of thinking.

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